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Message Text

PAGE 01 ROME 01933 082027Z

17-13
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W
---------- 107236
R 081945Z FEB 74
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3204

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 1933

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT IT
SUBJECT: RUMOR GOVERNMENT PROSPECTS

1. FOREIGN MINISTRY UNDERSECRETARY BENSI (SOCIALIST, DE MARTINO FACTION) TOLD AMBASSADOR FEBRUARY 8 THAT RECENT "SUMMIT" MEETING IN FACT RESOLVED NOTHING, AND SERVED ONLY TO POSTPONE COALITION CONFRONTATION ON ECONOMIC ISSUES UNTIL AFTER DIVORCE REFERENDUM. WHAT HAPPENS THEN WILL LARGELY DEPEND UPON WHETHER OR NOT ADVERSARIES IN REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN HAVE SUCCEEDED IN WAGING IT ON CIVIL BASIS. IF CENTER-LEFT RELATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN TOO SERIOUSLY DAMAGED BY CAMPAIGN POLEMICS, RUMOR GOVERNMENT COULD CONCEIVABLY CONTINUE, BUT IT WILL CERTAINLY FALL IF CAMPAIGN HAS BECOME OPEN SLUGGING MATCH BETWEEN LAY AND CATHOLIC FORCES. BENSI DISCOUNTED REPORTS THAT CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT SECRETARY FANFANI PERCEIVES HIMSELF AS LIKELY SUCCESSOR TO RUMOR AS PRIME MINISTER. RATHER, BENSI ANTICIPATES THAT FANFANI WILL CONTINUE IN PRESENT ROLE AS PARTY SECRETARY AND WILL PUT FORWARD AS PRIME MINISTER SOME LESSER DC CENTER PERSONALITY, PROBABLY PICCOLI. BENSI STRONGLY CRITICIZED LA MALFA'S ECONOMIC VIEWS AND COMPLAINED OF HIS CAPACITY THUS FAR TO IMPOSE THOSE VIEWS UPON COALITION PARTNERS. HE STRONGLY IMPLIED IN ANY NEW POST-REFERENDUM GOVERNMENT SOCIALISTS WILL STRIVE TO BLOCK LA MALFA, IF NOT REPUBLICAN PARTY ITSELF, FROM PARTICIPATION, AT LEAST IN KEY ECONOMIC MINISTRIES. INTERESTINGLY, BENSI CRITICIZED ENTIRE TROIKA (WHICH INCLUDES HIS FELLOW SOCIALIST GIOLITTI) AS ACADEMIC THEORISTS WHO HAVE NEVER THEMSELVES MANAGED A BUSINESS FIRM OR ACTUALLY WORKED FOR A LIVING.

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2. BENSI WAS ALSO CRITICAL OF FOREIGN MINISTER MORO, WHO HE SAYS IS OBVIOUSLY TIRED AND VERY POSSIBLY NOT WELL. ACCORDING TO BENSI, MORO TODAY LACKS THE ENERGIES AND FIRMNESS HE DISPLAYED AS PRIME MINISTER IN MID-1960'S.VOLPE

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